

Over the Moon... at Moondoggies Cafe and Grill



BEFORE WE BEGIN

The English eccentric, gambler and former clergyman, Charles Caleb Colton (1780-1832) once famously observed that, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." Shortly after the folks at Moondoggies came up with the idea of Burger Night some years back it seemed like Burger-themed evenings suddenly became ubiquitous.

We know the feeling. As soon as we started making the rounds on The Burger Beat, burgers appeared to gain a brand new culinary relevance amongst the regional media. That's fine with us. Opinions may vary, ultimately only yours counts.

A LOWCOUNTRY GEM

Burger Beat

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 14 August 2012 15:53

Head down Parris Avenue into the heart of Port Royal's Old Village, hang a left on 10th Street and you'll find Moongoggies on the immediate right shrouded in stately, moss-drenched oaks. We described the ambiance during a 2009 Moveable Feast:

The building is an old converted Lowcountry home [a stone's throw] from the marsh and Sandy Point, a nice thing to remember on a moonlit evening if you're in the mood for an after dinner stroll. Most of the first floor is wrapped in a rambling screened porch. A quarter of this is completely covered in English ivy, floor to ceiling, creating a kind of leafy green grotto. The main dining room, or Lodge Room is a vaulted chapel of wood, exposed beams and windows – rustic and airy. The richly stained flooring is tongue and groove heart pine salvaged by the original owner from old boxcars, polished by the cargo of time. Combined with the intimate lighting and the ivy draped porch the ambiance is almost surreal – like a Lowcountry "Midsummer Night's Dream" – in the waning of the day

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Having revisited that



piece prior to marshalling the forces for this edition of Burger Beat I can tell you that little or nothing has changed. And that is a very good thing. After more than seven years Moondoggies qualifies as a true Lowcountry gem – like going to your grandma's house, provided granny's a bit of an eccentric with a serious flare for cooking up some fine food at value prices. Then again if your granny charges you for meals...well, that counts as eccentric. Hey, around here we don't hide eccentric. We pour it a cocktail and give it a rocking chair on the porch. In point of fact there's ample porch-sitting opportunity right here, but it's Thursday and we've come for Burger Night – all eight of us.

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Co-owner, chef, chief guitarist and resident surfer, Jeff Harris, helps to shepherd us through the evening along with his wife Dawn – an old friend and colleague. Word of her Pimento Mac & Cheese (a Burger Night exclusive) may have swelled our numbers on its own accord.

Burger Night at Moondoggies is basically an indoor picnic. The deal is simple: a half pound Angus



burger made your way comes with two sides and a beer or soft drink for ten bucks. Deal. Remember, you won't find a processed, mass-produced "burger" in this column. We're just not lovin' it. The burgers on these pages are hand made and the photos are taken as soon as the plate hits the table (this is often a challenge).

"It's all about the meat," says Jeff. "You can pile toppings all over it, but in the end it all comes down to the quality of the meat."

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With Moondoggies' burgers it's not so much the trimmings on the plate that matter, but the trimmings that go into the burger that make it superior. The ground beef is an exclusive blend made fresh each week by Julian Johnson at Islands Meat Market.

"It's made from all the choice trimmings." Harris explains, "Filet, ribeye, sirloin and strip – what have you – all goes into these burgers."

The result is a thick, juicy, two-fisted burger that's neither too fatty nor too lean with a transcendent flavor bordering on luxury. I order mine with the works – lettuce, tomato, red onion – and a slab of sharp cheddar. Broccoli casserole and – yes! – Dawn's Pimento Mac & Cheese are my sides.

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